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Epigraphic Notes.—By CHARLES C. TORREY, Professor in Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

1. An Inscription from the "High-Place" of the Goddess Al-'Uzzā, in Petra.

IN the summer of 1906, Mr. George Sverdrup, who had just completed a year of study in the American School of Archæology in Jerusalem, made a journey to Petra. During his stay there he and his companions discovered several new inscriptions; some of them Greek, the others Nabatean. One of the latter class, a copy of which he sent me, seems to be of more than usual interest. Mr. Sverdrup says of it: "It was found on the great staircase leading up to the altar mentioned in the article by Dr. Hoskins in the *Biblical World* for May, 1906. The letters are all quite distinct. The inscription is complete at the left; at the right some letters are probably missing, judging from the weathering of the rock. The letters are on the average about ten inches high." His copy of the inscription is here reproduced:

עזר עזר עזר עזר עזר
עזר עזר עזר עזר עזר

Mr. Sverdrup was unable to find any satisfactory interpretation of the beginning and the end of the first line; the first word of the second line, which he read עזר, also gave him trouble. He recognized the name of the goddess Al-'Uzzā. If I am not mistaken, the main source of the difficulty lies in a misreading of the letters which follow the name אלעזר, in the first line. Instead of עזר must not the true reading be עזר, or else possibly עזר? Judging from what follows, a demonstrative pronoun is necessary at this point. The inscription would then read as follows:

* * אלמלקי די אלעזא ודנה בבתא

[די] עבר והבאלהי שירא

* * *The meeting-place of Al-'Uzzā; and this is the gateway [which] Wahbullāhi, the caravan-master, constructed.*

According to Mr. Sverdrup's copy, the seventh letter in the first line is ʔ. But as the relative pronoun ʔi is quite unlikely in a Nabatean inscription, I have conjectured ך.¹ As for the beginning of the first line, it may be that a demonstrative originally stood there; but of course it is possible that more is missing on the right than I have supposed. In all probability, the א is to be connected with the following, as I have indicated; we then have a genuine Arabic word, with the Arabic article, الْمَلَقَى, "the meeting-place," as the native name of this now famous sanctuary.

At the beginning of the second line, only the very slightest change from Mr. Sverdrup's copy is necessary in order to gain the reading עבר in place of עור. The last word in the line I suppose to be שִׁירָא, and this was also Mr. Sverdrup's interpretation. The proper name Wahbullāhi, وَهْبُ اللَّهِ, is already well known.

Below the right end of these two lines, at about the place where a third line would have begun, Mr. Sverdrup thought that he could see traces of the letters of a single word, which, he said, might be רכירין, though none of the characters could be made out with certainty. Of course this word, so common in Nabatean and Sinaitic inscriptions, may have been appended here either by the original hand or somewhat later. If it really belonged to this inscription, and was written with the plural ending, this would increase the probability that more is missing at the right hand, namely, the mention of some other person or persons. But in view of Mr. Sverdrup's uncertainty as to this word, it can hardly be taken into account.

¹ I have little doubt that the letter which Mr. Sverdrup read as ʔ really had originally the small additional stroke at the top which would have made it a ך. Future visitors to Petra may be able to settle this point. Of course the reading here carries with it the reading of the relative pronoun which I have conjectured at the beginning of the second line.

The "great staircase" on which the inscription was found is described as one of those which lead up to the "third high-place," discovered by Dr. Hoskins in November, 1905. That these stairways contained doors, or gates, appears from Dr. Hoskins' description of the first one which he found (*Biblical World*, May, 1906, p. 385): "At the point where we struck it the pathway enters a cyclopean cutting, . . . the entrance to which was once guarded and defended by *colossal doors*, as shown by the side walls, the sockets, and the cuttings for the lintel and the bars." Mr. Sverdrup says of the inscription that it was found "near the head of this same staircase, not more than a hundred feet from the top of the cliff." The word בִּנְתָּה, "gateway," might refer (1) to a door which stood at the place where the inscription was found; or (2) to the door at the foot of the stairs, described by Dr. Hoskins; or (3) to the staircase itself. It is a piece of good fortune, at all events, that we now have an inscription telling us the name of the deity who was worshipped at this great high-place, and the local designation of the place itself, as well as the name of one of those who were foremost in the work of constructing it.

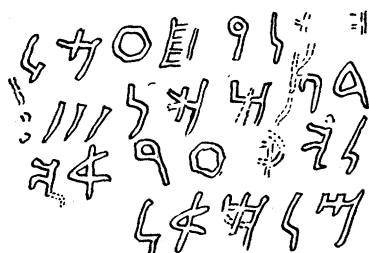
2. A Votive Statuette with a Phoenician Inscription.

Photographs of this statuette and a squeeze of the inscription were sent me by Professor Harvey Porter, of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, some time ago. His description of it is as follows (see the accompanying Plate): "The statuette has lost its head and shoulders. The figure is naked to the waist, but the drapery covering the lower part and the style of the whole clearly indicate a Baal or Zeus. It closely resembles the forms of this god found on the Phoenician and Greek coins, such as those of Alexander the Great or the coins of Tarsus under the Satraps. The eagle, usually borne in the right hand, here stands at the foot of the statuette, on the right. The fragment is 9 inches in height and 7 inches broad. It is of marble, and came from Sidon. The inscription is engraved in an incuse square on the back. The marble is somewhat weathered; there is also a defect in the stone which greatly obscures the first two letters in the first line, the second letter in the second line, and the third in the following lines."

This is evidently a genuine Phoenician antique. The inscription also is ancient; on this point, as in regard to the interpre-

tation of the statue, we may take Professor Porter's judgment as final, since he speaks as an expert of long experience. The statuette was undoubtedly a votive offering at the shrine of some god.

The most of the letters of the inscription (see the Plate) are perfectly clear, and no one of them is entirely obliterated; yet the interpretation of the whole is difficult. The following transcript is from a tracing made from the squeeze, the letters being just one half the size of the original.



The first two letters of the *first* line are almost entirely obliterated. The few remaining traces of the first letter seem to me to suggest '. If the long, but very indistinct, slanting line at the right could be regarded as part of this letter, then 𒀵 would be most probable. But it seems to me pretty certain that this line lies outside the inscription. The second letter was read as 𒀶 by Professor Porter, and this is possible. This part of the stone has been so badly damaged that the engraved lines can no longer be distinguished from the accidental ones. Judging from the marks which *now* appear, 𒀵 is also a possibility. The remaining letters of the line are all perfectly distinct.

In the *second* line, the first letter is pretty certainly 𒀶, though it may be 𒀶, and even 𒀵 must be admitted as a possibility. The second letter, which is badly damaged by the defect in the stone (see Professor Porter's description, above), might be 𒀶—though in that case the top of the letter is not closed—or perhaps '. It could hardly be 𒀵. The third letter is either 𒀵 or 𒀶, according as the line across the top is taken as original or secondary. To me it appears to be secondary. In case it were original, the letter might possibly be 𒀶, though this would be improbable. The fourth letter is either 𒀵 or 𒀶, probably the



former. The fifth letter is נ; and it is followed by a numeral. Professor Porter read the latter as 4, but the marks at the left look to me more like an accidental abrasion of the stone. In the squeeze they hardly appear at all. Still, Professor Porter may be right.

In the *third* line, the second and last letters seem to me to be י, though the small horizontal prong which I have indicated at the bottom on the right is not clear in either case. Its presence is not absolutely necessary, to be sure. The third letter in the line is destroyed. It might be ש, ע, כ (?), or possibly ת. The remaining four characters are certain.

In the *fourth* line, the second letter is probably נ, but might be ל; the third letter is probably מ, but might perhaps be ש.

I have fancied that I could see, both in the photograph and in the squeeze, traces of punctuation marks, namely periods used to separate the words. Such periods appear after the ע in the third line, and at the end of that line; also after the third letter in the last line. I have not been able to make them out elsewhere in the inscription, and it may be that their seeming distinctness in the places named is only accidental.

I offer the following transliteration and translation, as a first attempt at interpreting the inscription:

יהן רחעם ל
 דרכמן³
 לישע . ראי .
 מנם . אל

R H' M presented these vessels, amounting to three drachmas, (in return) for the preservation of his eyesight.

The translation supposes that the statuette was not itself the principal offering, but that it merely accompanied the gift to the god, as often happened. The word מנים, like the Hebrew כלים, might have any one of several meanings; compare its use in the Tabnit inscription. I suppose the second line to give the sum at which these votive objects were purchased.

The combination רחעם, as a proper name, is quite possible, and capable of explanation in several ways; the first element of the compound, for example, might be רחה (=חא), to live

in abundance), or a shortened form of רחב or רחם. The grammatical forms and constructions here supposed, moreover, all have their support in actual usage, Hebrew or Phoenician. The ' at the end of the third line I suppose to be the suffix of the third person singular.

This reading is the least objectionable of the half-dozen which have suggested themselves to me. If any one of my colleagues can find a better one, I shall be glad.

3. A Phoenician Seal.

The seal whose inscription is here reproduced is owned by a collector in Jerusalem. The accompanying facsimile is that of a cast made from a wax impression which was sent to me (see the preceding Plate). The characters are of a late type, and fairly well cut.



לאבעל
בן חנא

(Seal) of AB 'L, son of Hannā.

The name **לאבעל**, presumably **אב-בעל** or **אבי-בעל**, is already familiar as a Phoenician proper name. See Lidzbarski's Glossary, and also his *Ephemeris*, I, p. 35. The form of the **ל**, used both as a final and as a medial letter, is unusual and interesting. It is like the final **ל** which is common in the later Palmyrene script and appears occasionally elsewhere. The inversion of the **ל** which ends the first line is also to be remarked; such inversion occurs not infrequently both on seals and on coins. In general, the type of the characters employed is late Palestinian.